



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of California

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**EIGHT ARRESTED FOLLOWING TEN SEARCHES IN FRESNO, SAN JOSE,
AND SEATTLE**

Large-Scale Khat Importation Case

FRESNO, Calif.—Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown announced today that MOHAMED GASS HERSI, 50; AMRAN ISMAIL ALI, 45; GASS MOHAMED GASS HERSI, 22; ABDULKADIR GASS HERSI, 52; FOOSIYA MOHAMED GASS, 20, all of Fresno; ABDIKADIR MOHAMED GASS, 19; and ZEMZEM MOHAMED ILMI, 44, both of Seattle; and YUSUR ROBLE SAID, 43, of San Jose, Calif. were arrested by federal and state agents following the execution of 10 search warrants in Fresno, San Jose and Seattle.

This case is the product of a joint investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Fresno Police Department, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement with assistance from the California Highway Patrol, Merced-Mariposa HIDTA Task Force, California Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (BNE), Tulare County Sheriff's Department, and California Alcoholic Beverage Control.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Stanley A. Boone and Laurel Montoya, who are prosecuting the case, the defendants were charged in a criminal complaint issued by United States Magistrate Judge Dennis L. Beck charging them with conspiring to import, possess, and distribute hundreds of pounds of khat. The complaint charges the defendants with importing khat into the United States from Kenya, China, Ethiopia, and the United Kingdom. Once imported, the defendants and others then sell the khat for cash to distributors or personal users of the narcotic. The defendants and others often used commercial delivery services to import the khat from overseas and to distribute it to elsewhere in the United States.

Khat, which contains cathinone and cathine, a Schedule I and IV controlled substance, is a flowering evergreen shrub native to East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Usually just the leaves, twigs, and shoots of the khat shrub are used and are chewed intermittently to release the active drug. Dried plant material can be made into tea or a chewable paste. Khat can also be smoked and even sprinkled on food. Common side effects include anorexia, tachycardia, hypertension, insomnia, and gastric disorders. Chronic khat abuse can result in symptoms such as physical exhaustion, violence, and suicidal depression. Widespread, frequent use of khat impacts productivity because it tends to reduce worker motivation. Khat can induce manic behaviors, hyperactivity, and hallucinations.

The Fresno defendants are scheduled to appear before United State Magistrate Judge Dennis L. Beck on Friday, January 30, at the federal courthouse in Fresno.

The charges are only allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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